

☐ USFWS graphic title bar

## *North Florida Field Office*

### Sea Turtle Quick Facts

---

#### Green Sea Turtle (*Chelonia mydas*)

**FAMILY:** Cheloniidae

**STATUS:** Breeding colony populations in Florida and on the Pacific Coast of Mexico are listed as Endangered; all others are listed as Threatened (*Federal Register*, July 28, 1978).

**DESCRIPTION:** The green sea turtle grows to a maximum size of about 4 feet and a weight of 440 pounds. It has a heart-shaped shell, small head, and single-clawed flippers. Color is variable. Hatchlings generally have a black carapace, white plastron, and white margins on the shell and limbs. The adult carapace is smooth, keelless, and light to dark brown with dark mottling; the plastron is whitish to light yellow. Adult heads are light brown with yellow markings. Identifying characteristics include four pairs of costal scutes, none of which borders the nuchal scute, and only one pair of prefrontal scales between the eyes. Hatchling green turtles eat a variety of plants and animals, but adults feed almost exclusively on seagrasses and marine algae.

For more information on [Green sea turtles go here.](#)

#### Hawksbill Sea Turtle (*Eretmochelys imbricata*)

**FAMILY:** Cheloniidae

**STATUS:** Endangered throughout its range (*Federal Register*, June 2, 1970).

**DESCRIPTION:** The hawksbill is a small to medium-sized marine turtle having an elongated oval shell with overlapping scutes on the carapace, a relatively small head with a distinctive hawk-like beak, and flippers with two claws. General coloration is brown with numerous splashes of yellow, orange, or reddish-brown on carapace. The plastron is yellowish with black spots on the intergular and postanal scutes. Juveniles are black or very dark brown with light brown or yellow coloration on the edge of the shell, limbs, and raised ridges of the carapace. As an adult, the hawksbill may reach up to 3 feet in length and weigh up to 300 pounds, although adults more commonly average about 2½ feet in length and weigh between 95 to 165 pounds. It is the only sea turtle with a combination of two pairs of prefrontal scales on the head and four pairs of costal scutes on the carapace. The hawksbill feeds primarily on sponges and is most often associated with the coral reef community.

For more information on [Hawksbill sea turtles go here.](#)

#### Kemp's Ridley Sea Turtle (*Lepidochelys kempii*)

**FAMILY:** Cheloniidae

**STATUS:** Endangered throughout its range (*Federal Register*, December 2, 1970).

**DESCRIPTION:** The Kemp's ridley turtle is one of the smallest of the sea turtles, with adults reaching about 2 feet in length and weighing up to 100 pounds. The adult Kemp's ridley has an oval carapace that is almost as wide as it is long and is usually olive-gray in color. The carapace has five pairs of costal scutes. In each bridge adjoining the plastron to the carapace, there are four inframarginal scutes, each of which is perforated by a pore. The head has two pairs of prefrontal scales. Hatchlings are black on both sides. The Kemp's ridley has a triangular-shaped head with a somewhat hooked beak with large crushing surfaces. This turtle is a shallow water benthic feeder with a diet consisting primarily of crabs.

For more information on [Kemp's Ridley sea turtles go here.](#)

## Leatherback Sea Turtle (*Dermochelys coriacea*)

**FAMILY:** Dermochelyidae

**STATUS:** Endangered throughout its range (*Federal Register*, June 2, 1970).

**DESCRIPTION:** The leatherback is the largest, deepest diving, and most migratory and wide ranging of all sea turtles. The adult leatherback can reach 4 to 8 feet in length and 500 to 2000 pounds in weight. Its shell is composed of a mosaic of small bones covered by firm, rubbery skin with seven longitudinal ridges or keels. The skin is predominantly black with varying degrees of pale spotting; including a notable pink spot on the dorsal surface of the head in adults. A toothlike cusp is located on each side of the gray upper jaw; the lower jaw is hooked anteriorly. The paddle-like clawless limbs are black with white margins and pale spotting. Hatchlings are predominantly black with white flipper margins and keels on the carapace. Jellyfish are the main staple of its diet, but it is also known to feed on sea urchins, squid, crustaceans, tunicates, fish, blue-green algae, and floating seaweed.

For more information on [Leatherback sea turtles go here.](#)

## Loggerhead Sea Turtle (*Caretta caretta*)

**FAMILY:** Cheloniidae

**STATUS:** Threatened throughout its range (*Federal Register*, July 28, 1978).

**DESCRIPTION:** The loggerhead is characterized by a large head with blunt jaws. The carapace and flippers are a reddish-brown color; the plastron is yellow. The carapace has five pairs of costal scutes with the first touching the nuchal scute. There are three large inframarginal scutes on each of the bridges between the plastron and carapace. Adults grow to an average weight of about 200 pounds. The species feeds on mollusks, crustaceans, fish, and other marine animals.

For more information on [Loggerhead sea turtles go here.](#)

## Olive Ridley Sea Turtle (*Lepidochelys olivacea*)

**FAMILY:** Cheloniidae

**STATUS:** Breeding colony populations on the Pacific Coast of Mexico are listed as Endangered; all others are listed as Threatened (*Federal Register*, July 28, 1978).

**DESCRIPTION:** The olive ridley was named for the olive color of its heart-shaped shell and is one of the smallest of the sea turtles, with adults reaching 2 to 2½ feet in length and weighing 80 to 110 pounds. The species may be identified by the uniquely high and variable numbers of vertebral and costal scutes. Although some individuals have only five pairs of costals, in nearly all cases some division of costal scutes occurs, so that as many as six to nine pairs may be present. In addition, the vertebral scutes also show frequent division, as do the scales on the dorsal surface of the head. The prefrontal scales, however, typically number two pairs. Existing reports suggest that the olive ridley's diet includes crabs, shrimp, rock lobsters, jellyfish, and tunicates. In some parts of the world, algae has been reported as its principal food.

For more information on [Olive Ridley sea turtles](#) go [here](#).

## [How can I help protect sea turtles?](#)

---

► [Home](#) ► [Sea Turtle Main Page](#)

---

PDF files can be downloaded and read using Adobe Acrobat Reader. This software is free and available at <http://www.adobe.com/>

Note: PDF file accessibility tools available at Access Adobe - <http://access.adobe.com>

---

Send comments on our web site or general questions to [northflorida@fws.gov](mailto:northflorida@fws.gov)

If you need special assistance please contact the Public Affairs Officer at [chuck\\_underwood@fws.gov](mailto:chuck_underwood@fws.gov)

Last modified February 16, 2005

USFWS, U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service, FWS, permit reviews, projects, species recovery, Florida, Fish and Wildlife, florida manatee, wildlife, endangered, threatened, endangered species act, ESA, marine mammal protection act, MMPA, eagles, whooping cranes, cranes, florida scrub-jay, scrub jay, jay, scrub, sea turtles, loggerhead, kemp's ridley, kemp's ridley sea turtle, olive ridley, olive ridley sea turtle, hawksbill, hawksbill sea turtle, hawks bill, green sea turtle, leatherback, turtle, red-cockaded woodpeckers, woodpeckers, RCW, beach mouse, beach mice, mouse, snake, indigo snake, recovery, regulation, regulatory, permit reviews, Section Seven, section 7, section 10, habitat, habitat conservation, habitat conservation plan, HCP, incidental take, incidental take permits, reviews, consultation, north florida, nassau, duval, clay, st. johns, saint johns, bradford, putnam, flagler, volusia, seminole, orange, brevard, lake, sumter, hernando, pasco, pinellas, hillsborough, manatee, citrus, levy, dixie, alachua, marion, union, baker, columbia, suwannee, hamilton, madison, taylor, lafayette, gilchrist, tampa, jacksonville, gainesville, crystal river, orlando, st. petersburg, daytona, daytona beach, st. augustine, saint augustine, saint petersburg, orange park, lake city, palatka, Blue Spring, homosassa, springs, boating, resource, natural resources, recreation, property, development, growth, impacts, environment, environmental, environmental impacts, recovery plans, recovery implementation, safe harbor, habitat, critical habitat, critical habitat designation